

## THE FAIRFAX AREA AGENCY ON AGING PRESENTS CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE MARCH 2006

"Caregiver's Corner Online" is an electronic newsletter produced by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (AAA) with funding from the National Family Caregiver Support Program of the Older Americans Act. Our goal is to send you information to support you as a family caregiver for an older adult.

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**1. COMFORT ALERT.** In caring for older loved ones, we sometimes wonder why it is so difficult for them to accept help. It can be frustrating as we try to convince someone that he/she needs bath equipment for safety, or incontinence products for better hygiene, or perhaps a microwave for convenience and cooking safety. This article was written by Dani and Gene Feierstein and is courtesy of SeniorNavigator at [www.seniornavigator.org](http://www.seniornavigator.org).

Recently while I was visiting my mother in New York, I saw how difficult it was for her to ask for things that would make her more comfortable. It became apparent to me that there could be several reasons for this. As I thought about it I came up with some possible rationales:

- a. Not wanting to impose on others. It must be very difficult and frustrating for someone who has been independent and able to see to their own needs to have to rely on someone else to fulfill even part of their needs. Imagine a woman who has run a household, raised a family and possibly also had a job outside the house, who now has to rely on a caregiver--be it her child or someone else--to buy bed linens, towels, or things like clothing.

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b. Fear of wasting money. Some people can be very reluctant to purchase what might be deemed non-essential things. They may have limited financial resources and have little for anything beyond food, medication and rent. Even if they have the money, they are afraid to spend it because they feel they may need it in the future. Unfortunately, this is a common situation for many elderly people and it can be absolutely terrifying for them.

c. Making do. It seems that many people of my parent's generation, because of the times they lived through, feel that they need to use things until the bitter end--and then use them even more. What we take for granted might seem to be luxuries to them. We throw away threadbare sheets and towels you can see through or maybe we make rags out of them. My parent's generation threw out very little. If it could still be used, it was.

d. Expressing the need. It can take a great amount of effort to explain what you want. Then you have to define color, size, model or purpose. It can be very complicated and exhausting. It can also be embarrassing if the items involve personal care or hygiene, so why bother?

e. Feeling they haven't "earned" something. They may believe they are not entitled to something because they are no longer making a financial or emotional contribution to the household. For example, a mother who was the linchpin of the family and can no longer function in that role might feel that she no longer has the right to things that could make her life more comfortable.

Statistics show that many more caregivers are now men, and sheets and towels are simply not things that most men notice, but this is not only about sheets, towels and pillows. It's also about brighter light bulbs, hearing aid batteries, beauty parlor appointments, and transportation. Once again it becomes the responsibility of the caregiver to notice things like this and ask if the person wants to have something done about it. Even then, they may have to be good at reading the facial expression or the tone of voice of the person they are dealing with. It is very difficult for me to see my mother in a dependent role. She was always a strong, independent and self-reliant woman. I can't begin to imagine what it must cost her to ask for everything that she needs from someone who is younger.

**2. PHONE SCAM YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF AS A CAREGIVER FOR AN OLDER ADULT.** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) warns seniors and people with disabilities to be aware of a scheme that asks Medicare beneficiaries for money and checking account information to help them enroll in a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. This scheme is called the "\$299 Ring" for the typical amount of money Medicare beneficiaries are talked into withdrawing from their checking accounts to pay for a non-

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existent prescription drug plan. Consumers can report these cases to their local law enforcement agencies or 1-877-7SAFERX (1-877-772-3379). Whenever you have a question or concern about any activity regarding Medicare, call 1-800-MEDICARE. (Thanks to the e-newsletter of the Disability Services Planning and Development unit for this information. If you would like to receive their newsletter, please visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/email/lists](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/email/lists) and look for Disability e-news information.)

3. In the February edition of "Caregiver's Corner Online," we ran an article titled, "March is National Nutrition Month." Unfortunately, we omitted the name of the author. Julie Leopold, RD, Nutrition Program Manager at INOVA Healthsource kindly submitted the article and the information on nutrition classes at INOVA. She has offered to do some additional articles in the future. Thank you, Julie!

Do you have a topic that you, as a caregiver, would like to know more about through this newsletter? Please contact the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging with your ideas. We want this to be useful news for you. Our e-mail address is [fairfax\\_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:fairfax_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov). You can also reach us by phone at 703-324-5401.

**4. FREE SEMINARS FOR CAREGIVERS OF OLDER ADULTS.** Have you ever wondered what you would do if your parent were no longer able to live alone without help? What would you do about care, housing, legal issues? Do you have a relative with dementia? Are bathing and meal times becoming stressful? Are you managing the family finances for the first time?

The Fairfax Caregiver Seminar Consortium will address these issues and more in the Spring 2006 series of presentations for caregivers of older adults. These free seminars will be presented by experts at various times and places in Fairfax County during April and May. Registration is not required but is strongly encouraged. Please call 703-324-5205, TTY 703-449-1186, to register or to request reasonable ADA accommodations. Seminar details are posted on the Web site of the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa/). Each seminar is presented on its own, so you do not have to attend all.

The April seminars are:

Seminar #1: "Transitions - When More Help is Needed," Tuesday April 4, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Lewinsville Adult Day Health Care Center, 1609 Great Falls St., McLean.

Seminar #2: "Understanding Communication and Behavior in Alzheimer's Disease," Friday, April 7, 10:00-11:30 a.m., Alzheimer's Family Day Center, 2812 Old Lee Highway, Suite 210, Fairfax.

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Seminar #3: "Financial Management 101," Tuesday April 11, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Drive, Centreville.

Seminar #4: "Home is No Longer an Option...Now What?" on Tuesday, April 18, 1:00-2:30 p.m., Herndon Senior Center, 873 Grace Street, Herndon.

Seminar #5: "Long Distance Caregiving," Wednesday, April 19, 7:00-8:30 p.m., George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale.

Seminar #6: "Navigating the Legal and Medicaid Maze of Long Term Care," Wednesday, April 26, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Lincolnia Adult Day Health Care Center, 4710 N. Chambliss Street, Alexandria.

**5. GRANDPARENT SUPPORT GROUPS RESUME.** If you or someone you know provides custodial care for minor relatives, the kinship care support groups are a way to touch base with other such caregivers. Sponsored by the Fairfax County Department of Family Services and Fairfax County Public Schools, Family Services and Involvement Section, groups are meeting as follows:

**\*\*Bryant Alternative High School, 2709 Popkins Lane, Alexandria,**  
on Thursdays, March 16, April 6 and 20, and May 4 and 18.

**\*\*Pennino Human Services Building, 12011 Government Center Parkway,**  
Fairfax, on Tuesdays, March 21, April 4 and 18, and May 2 and 16.

Childcare is available on advance request of at least 24 hours. Please contact Robin Hamby at 703-277-2640; TTY Betsy Pugin at 703-449-1186.

**6. CAREGIVER CONFERENCE.** The Prince William Long Term Care Coordinating Committee and Westminster at Lake Ridge are co-hosting "A Compass for Caregivers" conference for caregivers of older persons. Keynote speaker will be Teepa Snow, an occupational therapist currently serving as Education Director and Lead Trainer for the Eastern North Carolina Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. The conference will be held Saturday, April 29, 2006 at Westminster at Lake Ridge, 12191 Clipper Drive, Woodbridge, VA, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Cost is \$25 per person or \$45 per couple and includes continental breakfast, lunch and respite care (if required). Registration deadline is Friday, April 14 (space is limited). To register, please contact the Prince William Area Agency on Aging at 703-792-6374. For more information, visit their Web site at [www.pwcgov.org/aoa](http://www.pwcgov.org/aoa).

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**7. PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF "CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE" NEWSLETTER.**

Current and past editions of the "Caregiver's Corner Online" newsletter are available online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa/caregivers\\_corner\\_nl.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa/caregivers_corner_nl.htm).

Please note that these items are included for informational purposes only and do not imply endorsement by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging or Fairfax County Government.

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For further information, please contact an Aging Information Specialist at the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (telephone: 703-324-7948; TTY 703-449-1186 or e-mail: [fairfax\\_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:fairfax_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov)). Visit our Web site at: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa).

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